

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, PORS, ELAB, BL

SUBJ: COMIBOL OFFICIALS DENY NEWSPAPER REPORT OF GENERAL STRIKE
AT SIGLO XX MINE

REF: A. LA PAZ 5411, B. LA PAZ 5256 AND PREVIOUS

1. SENIOR COMIBOL OFFICIALS ADVISE EMBOFFS THAT THE ACCOUNT IN LA PAZ NEWSPAPER "PRESENCIA" JULY 9 OF A RETURN TO GENERAL STRIKE AT SIGLO XX MINE (IN THE CATAVI COMPLEX) ARE COMPLETELY FALSE. THE ARTICLE STATES THAT MINERS RETURNED TO STRIKE BECAUSE OF THE REFUSAL OF MILITARY AUTHORITIES OCCUPYING THE MINE TO HOLD DISCUSSIONS WITH MINeworkERS REPRESENTATIVES. PRESENCIA ALSO SAYS THE SITUATION AT THE HUANUNI AND MINA MATILDE MINES IS TENSE FOR SUCH REASONS AS GOB FAILURE TO LIVE UP TO COMMITMENTS IT MADE WHEN IT PERSUADED MINERS TO RETURN TO WORK.

2. THE GOB HAS REFUSED TO PERMIT JOURNALISTS TO VISIT MINING AREAS SINCE THE MILITARY OCCUPATION OF THE MINES IN JUNE. THE BOLIVIAN PRESS/RADIO ACCORD REQUESTED AN AUDIENCE WITH PRESIDENT BANZER ON JULY 5 TO DISCUSS THE SITUATION OF THE COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA IN MINING CENTERS (AS WELL AS LIMITATIONS ON PRESS FREEDOM AND THE UNIVERSITY AND MINING PROBLEMS). THE GOB HAS SINCE

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ANNOUNCED THAT MINISTER OF INTERIOR PEREDA, SECRETARY GENERAL OF

THE PRESIDENCIA JAVIER ARCE, AND GOB PRESS SECRETARY RENAN ESTENSORRO WOULD MEET WITH THE PRESS/RADIO GROUP ON JULY 9. ARMY COMMANDER ALVAREZ WAS ACCOSTED BY REPORTERS RECENTLY AS HE LEFT THE NATIONAL PALACE AND QUOTED AS SAYING HE SAW NO REASON WHY REPORTERS SHOULD VISIT MINING AREAS SINCE THE ARMED FORCES WERE PROVIDING THE PRESS WITH ALL THE INFORMATION THEY NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE SITUATION THERE.

3. EMBASSY COMMENT: WITH THE PRESS BARRED FROM MINING AREAS, AND MOST UNION LEADERS JAILED OR EXILED, ACCURATE INFORMATION ON THE SITUATION IN THE MINES IS DIFFICULT TO GET. THERE ARE INDICATORS (SUCH AS THE RETURN TO NORMAL ELECTRIC POWER USAGE IN MINING AREAS) THAT FOR THE MOMENT MINERS HAVE RETURNED TO WORK. BUT THERE ARE ALSO MANY SIGNS OF DISCONTENT WITH THE GOB'S CONTINUED MILITARY OCCUPATION OF THE MINES AND THE TREATMENT OF WORKERS AND UNION LEADERS. THE APPARENTLY INACCURATE PRESENCIA ARTICLE ON SIGLO XX MAY BE INTENDED AS GENTLE HINT THAT IF THE GOB CONTINUES TO BAR THE NEWS MEDIA FROM THE MINES, THE PRESS WILL PRINT WHATEVER INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE, ACCURATE OR NOT. STEDMAN

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